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ART IMPRESSIONS ABROAD.*

DR. CHANNING comes of a family devoted to culture and art, being a brother of the late eminent clergyman of that name, and of the late professor of rhetoric at Harvard, and closely connected by family intermarriages with Allston and the elder Dana. With intelligence of his own, and such treasures of intercourse, as he may be supposed to have had from such connections, the presentation of a book of travel-impressions by him cannot but create a desire, even in those satiated with such things, to see what this new one has to say.

The book pronounces itself an honest record of the impressions of the hour on a cultured man, without that staleness that comes from afterwards working a journal up with readings from guide books, histories, works of travel, topography, and statistics. The writer professes a cool abhorrence of sight-seeing, as such, but has kept his eyes open, wherever he happened to be. He was once struck with a remark to him, that a thought will clothe itself; and, in accordance with this, his style shows little study, but a degree of spontaneousness, sometimes running to tautology, pleasant enough in a book of this description, whatever we may think of it generally. We might remark on many things in it, but we must confine ourselves to his reflections on Art. These we extract not to endorse or reject opinions, but simply to indicate how the subject of Art interests a cultivated American in Europe. Our travelling countrymen are generally too ignorant of Art (not of pictures, frames, and "marbles,") but of the significance of Art as best representing the growth of the human mind. Books, like this of Dr. Channing's, and those by George S. Hillard, and Horace Binney Wallace, especially the latter, are far more instructive to the reading public, for being expressions of thoughts about Art, than they are as reliable authority upon matters of criticism. We honor those who talk on the subject, especially those who talk intelligently and earnestly.

Paraphrasing Lord Bolingbroke's apothegm on history, he says,

"Art is literature teaching by example. Its works have the same sources as do books—they speak, equally from and to the mind. *Art is essentially representative.* Look at architecture. A Gothic cathedral, what is it, but an expression of trains of thought—an epic with its beginning, middle, and end. It existed in the artist's mind as a whole—a divine harmony fusing its parts or members into one."

Accordingly he don't like the borrowing for, or adaptation of, the Grecian Temple to modern worship, as in the Madeleine, in Paris; it lacking the representative element of the Gothic. He says:

"The temple never pleases me as a church: in the ancient

* *A Physician's Vacation; or, A Summer [1852] in Europe.* By WALTER CHANNING.

"For so to interpose a little ease."—*Milton.*
Boston: Ticknor & Fields. 1856. 12mo. 564 pp.

simplicity of its interior, if this be strictly followed, we may have poverty, not grandeur; and if we break it up by pews for religious uses, vastness is lost in the process. The Gothic is grand in its immensity, and harmonious in its exquisite detail. You never feel disappointed when you pass from the outer magnificence into that which it contains; or for which it is. You stand in astonishment at such a fulfillment which so exceeds the promise. You walk with noiseless steps, and speak with subdued voice. Truly is the old cathedral a poem, written in immortal pages and forever singing of devotion—of love—of aspiration—ever in tune—in harmony with the worship of the infinite."

The Dom of Strasburg, of course, elates him.

"I have stood by its walls, and examined the infinite detail and beauty, in which the Gothic mind, or style, has here manifested itself. I say beauty—what vastness, what solemnity rules here, and with what effect do they declare themselves and their mighty power. Stand in the midst of this cathedral-magnificence—its outside height and length and breadth—its inside religious light, just revealing enough of its meanings to move in you the religious—the divine; and you unconsciously wander back to the days of its beginning, and hold communion with that mind which conceived its idea, and who in that had faith and prophecy of its completion. The cathedral is unfinished: one spire only is built.* But so perfect is it in all its other parts, that this local imperfection exists without suggesting the idea of a want of universal symmetry."

Again, he says:

"Distinctness is everywhere. Everything tells its story. The light is on the projecting edge or outline. The shadow is between all parts that are so related, as to prevent the equal entrance of light. The effects are beautiful; and you cannot but feel grateful that there was a time in human history when such works might be begun, and that the latest ages have not neglected them."

He speaks of the influence of Art on the mass:

"The special culture which Art demands for its best enjoyment and influences can only come of the study of its works. No nation is complete, as a whole, which does not furnish to itself the best means of the highest culture. The gallery and literature must be close neighbors, or better—companions, and as free to the people—the whole people, as are the light and the air, for like these they can only do good."

There is a bit of merited satire on restrictions in such things, given in a little anecdote. He went to the British Museum, to see the library and some of its collections of art and science, but found them locked up, and only opened by an order. There were people sitting and standing about the halls, and he asked a man what these people came for. "To eat their lunches," said he.

It is a credit both to the heart and understanding of a people to see such things better managed. There is a feeling for the higher welfare of a nation shown in any throwing open of exhibitions, where those that through them can

* "This is alluded to, because in America, I remember at least one church in which this striking defect in the Strasburg Dom is copied as an architectural perfection—two towers with one spire." Page 425.

feel themselves grow inwardly in the contemplation of works of Art. There is a just regard for the dignity of Genius, and the importance of its teachings in such an act as that of Denmark in building at Copenhagen a palace to be the lasting shrine for the admirers of Thorwaldsen, and an abiding place forever for its works. There are few of us that cannot be taught to feel this power as our traveller does, and who can say that we are not made better by such sensations, and what a boon towards mutual enjoyment, if all our brothers could feel as we do. He says:

"Look where you will upon such works, and the feeling comes over you that you are among thoughts, not things. You must array yourself with the wings of Psyche, and, a winged soul, live and move, and have your being in this vast treasury of the soul's best accomplishments. We are made better by the daily, hourly teaching of such works. We have the revelation of true beauty in ourselves, when we see and love the same which has come out of our own nature, in another. The world is made better by such works, as by the blessed sun, the pure air, the vast, the over new ministries of nature."

The American mind particularly needs the influence of works of Art exposed in public places. They are essential to the complete and thorough development of it. Everybody, who has been abroad—we mean those who went *voluntarily*—has experienced that peculiar and gratifying sensation of almost feeling their minds grow within them as they are brought under the impressions that works of art and associations of history, bestow. Our author describes such.

"He has never before been within their reach. He is conscious of wider thought, deeper pleasure, higher aspirations. He is glad to be where he is, because he has been made conscious of means of a higher growth than he may have dreamed of before. He learns, and may be for the first time, or, after a manner never felt before, of moral and intellectual power, by the sure evidences of his own senses, and by the new currents of thought within him. The traveller feels that what is around him in Art is in some sense his own. The thought to which it gave birth is his own thought, making subjective the external, the representative—a part of his spiritual possession, and that forever. It comes to him by association wherever he may be—a visiting angel with a new message of the beautiful."

It is the causes of such sensations that we are advocates for having Art in our midst.

To our author again. He saw a Düsseldorf gallery in Berlin, and pronounces upon that school thus:

"The pictures are copies, perfect copies if you will, of Nature. Now Nature copies itself; but in infinite variety, with infinite modifications, but always truly does Nature come and pass before us. A painter is not a creator; a poet, a true artist, who copies anything. Nature is before him, and in presenting Nature to us he does so, not as his eyes saw it, but as the mind has used that which the eye has offered him for love, and for study. Nature must be *idealized* whenever she is presented to me by another mind. Thus the painter will clothe them in another atmosphere, so that you will feel you were seeing his work as you do Nature's, through a medium that he

provided just as true as that which Nature makes about hers. The Düsseldorf school copies, imitates Nature. Everything stands out with a wholly unnatural clearness; I had almost said audacious accuracy. The thought is lost in the paint, instead of the paint being lost in the thought. It wants *medium*. You always have the *thing itself*, while in pictures, as in other modes of expressing thought, the suggestion is sometimes better than the thing."

We rather suspect there is a hinting at conventionalism in the above extracts. A man resembles what he comprehends, says Goethe. If we comprehend Nature (otherwise we should not paint her), we shall resemble her, and the emanation of our individual sentiment will be the same with that of what we paint, and the coincidence will conceal ourselves, as a "*medium*," the consequence being Nature will stand before us on the canvas as in reality, granting the same pleasure, and arousing the same impulses as it ought. We want to have a sentiment of Nature caught, not exchanged for our own. A mere lifeless imitation won't do. Let us have the spirit of Nature, and we have the best picture. Such pictures as the author alludes to above are, perhaps, valuable mental data, high in their peculiar merit, but not to be confounded with genuine pictures, *voluntarily* and humbly rendered by Nature's boon worshippers. The dread is of such interpreting pictures, as those of the Düsseldorf school, because it is a way naturally fallen into; producing mannerism. All minor artists are mannerists. It is only when the artist frees himself from such trammels and becomes the very counterpart of Nature, despising himself, that he is truly great. We may be asked, can an artist now be allowed to proclaim himself? Yes. How? In his sympathies; by the subjects he chooses. The mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet, and Mahomet went to the mountain. So let the artist do. If the scene don't accord with his sympathies, let him not pervert it into doing so, but find rather one that will. Such only can he *voluntarily* and acceptably portray.

To come now to copying pictures. Those who have passed through the great galleries of Europe know to what an extent mere jobber-artists are encountered, with pallet in hand, transferring as far as they can, to their own canvas, the most celebrated pictures. Such experience is enough to sicken one of copies, surely, as it evidently has our travelling physician. Side by side with the originals, the inadequateness of such things is only too apparent. Our author, however, uses positive language:

"A copy must be a failure. In the original is embodied the master's mind. Who can copy a mind? Nobody."

We are constrained to allow that this has great force. But *manifestations* of mind (like the sentiment of Nature), as in pictures, may be more attainable, and are just that portion of the mental faculty which can, if any, be seized to an extent which, in the nature of things, may be deemed a copy. We suppose no landscapist has ever to

an absolute degree succeeded in expressing all that a scene *might* suggest, but to say because this is the case, that no scene has ever been faithfully painted, would be to place a standard so high, that such a thing as perfect Art could never be attained. We revert to our former maxim. A copyist should resemble his model. To say that no mind was ever identical with another is most true. But when a mind is put into a picture, making the natural sentiment of it, its manifestation can be observable to a state of precision, if observable at all. Consequently, in the nature of things, we believe two minds exist near enough alike for the one to seize palpable manifestations of the other, *ergo*, the *possibility* of copy—of course, any effects of time must be out of the question, as they did not emanate from the original mind.

Dr. Channing joins in the complaints of not a few relative to the bad light in many of the galleries he entered. The staring level windows throwing a direct light upon the opposite wall of pictures in the Hermitage; a similar disposition at Dresden. He was not at the Hague, or he would have admired the arrangements for swinging the large pictures into light, which is practised in the gallery there. The Italian galleries he did not visit. That of Munich owes its origin to too appreciative a monarch, to be wanting in good arrangements in such respects. It was in the Louvre, however, that our traveller was most impressed with the devotion Art receives, as in that immense palace, consecrated to its genius, and the power it exercises over the mass, as expressed in the crowd that throngs it, moving so reverentially, and breaking the silence with nothing but low and rare whispers:

"Now is it not well?" he asks. "Such culture, such means of culture for a whole people! Here in Paris—ever living, ever moving, ever cheerful Paris—in its very centre, in the midst and presence of fashion, pleasure, business, such as it is—yes, here in the centre of all antagonisms and attractions is the teacher, the great teacher of the whole people."

If we are thus impressed with the Louvre, an all-embracing collection of wide Art, culled from all times and nations, to do honor to its possessors and educate the world, there are sensations connected with such others, as that devoted to Thorwaldsen at Copenhagen, which affect us as much, in being the humble devotion of one people, to their presiding Art-Genius.

"Who would not stop on his way through the rough and stormy Baltic to visit the shrine of Thorwaldsen—that double shrine, which contains his silent body and the ever-loving, ever-speaking accomplishments of his exalted genius?"

Our author is filled with a new life at the thought of such things. He gazes reverently on that palace reared to Genius; thinks on the triumph of that last visit, when the sculptor's townsmen received him so royally; and contrasted it with his early life as a poor stone-cutter. "I have certainly never known," says he, "what it was to feel

the capacities of my own nature, as in this the latest experiences of my life, in the midst and presence of such works as these of Thorwaldsen and of kindred minds." He visited the sculptor's grave—alone by himself in the quadrangle of this palace of Art, the great man rests, and fresh flowers, trimmed by votive hands, are the only accompaniments of the spot. To the cathedral he went also—and there the Christ, as Thorwaldsen's chisel left it, seemed to be speaking but one word to him, "Come."

Thus with that gentle, winsome mien, that the great author of Christianity puts forth to allure all to his embrace, the benign Genius of Art beseeches those who can feel and grow better, with that same monosyllable—Come.

YOUTH, LOVE, AND HOPE.

With song, and silver-dripping oar,
Youth, Love, and Hope pushed off from shore;
Their wake flashed far and free:
Their light, the heaven which brightened o'er them;
Their guide, the stream which shone before them;
How gaily went the three!

For them, each wave was moonlight-gilded;
For them, each rock was coral-built;
A glory crowned the strand.
The mermaids in their crystal caves
Heard their low laughter through the waves
Sifting, like golden sand.

Now, drifting under quiet skies,
Only into each other's eyes
Looked Love and Youth the while.
But, musing, Hope averted hers,
And only watched the silent stars
With faint and tranquil smile.

Now gazing on the heaven above,
Now glancing with an equal love
Upon the heaven below.
Oh, had the upper light alone
Upon her gifted temples shone,
So had it shone there now!

Leaning, she strove to grasp the tide,
Which swelled in silver at her side,
And broke in flashing bars.
Bewildered by the changeful gleam
That danced and dazzled from the stream,
She sank among the stars!

Love saw her bright hair gild the wave:
Love sprang in fatal haste to save—
The chill wave swept the shore.
Two lives in that mysterious river
Went out, forever and forever!
To be re-lit no more.

And Youth went on his way alone.
The light which all around him shone,
Still as he turned, grew dark.
Alas the heart! where'er it be,
Whose love and hope go down at sea,
While Youth yet guides the bark!